RESOURCE EXTRACTION :

Resource extraction includes activities such as mining, specifically for coal. More than two-thirds of West Virginia's 24,282 square miles lie within the Appalachian bituminous coal area, an area rich in coal and natural gas. This area is recognized to be the most valuable fuel deposit in the U.S. Coal production is a popular industry in West Virginia. Thirty-nine of the 55 counties in West Virginia are coal producing counties. West Virginia has ranked among the top five states in coal production for most of the twentieth century.

Despite the economic benefits from this industry, coal production has also caused environmental impacts. Some nonpoint source pollutants include sediments produced from erosion, wastewater from mining, alkaline mine drainage, acid mine drainage and metal-laden drainage. The resources affected include agriculture, air, fish and wildlife, groundwater, surface water, land, soils, vegetation, human quality of life and water usage.

The programs that West Virginia currently has is the Abandoned Mine Lands (AML) Program, which aims to reclaim and restore abandoned mine areas to protect the health, safety, and general welfare of the public and the environment, the Abandoned Mine Land Fund, which has enabled West Virginia to reclaim thousands of acres of abandoned mine lands and many miles of streams clogged by mine sediment or polluted coal mine drainage. Two other important programs is Stream Partners and the Appalachian Clean Streams Initiative, partnerships of federal, state, local government, and university researchers, that have focused on education and restoration projects in watersheds.

Specific goals in the management plan for resource extraction include:

1. By 2025, support and attain designated and beneficial water uses in watersheds affected by acid mine drainage from abandoned mine lands.

2. By 2010, provide information and data necessary utilizing a Holistic Watershed Approach to assist in developing watershed management plans through the Watershed Management Framework for the protection and restoration of water resources impacted by resource extraction category NPS pollution.

3. Participate in watershed-based programs to support resource extraction category NPS pollution watershed protection and restoration activities.

4. By 2001, begin the implementation of watershed protection and restoration plans in priority watersheds that address resource extraction category NPS pollution utilizing a Holistic Watershed Approach through a Watershed Management Framework that identifies priorities, solutions, funding, implementation, and stakeholders.

5. By 2001, begin the development and implementation of new and innovative BMPs, treatment and abatement alternatives, and prevention technologies for resources extraction category NPS pollution.

6. By 2004, increase existing and secure additional funding for resource extraction category NPS pollution watershed protection and restoration projects, Holistic Watershed Approach, and Watershed Management Framework.

7. Participate in fostering five Watershed Associations per Watershed Management Framework cycle to implement a Holistic Watershed Approach and participate in the Watershed Management Framework to support watershed protection, restoration, and management activities relating to resource extraction category NPS pollution.

8. Participate in five public forums by 2006 to provide outreach and education and create resource extraction category NPS pollution awareness as a part of the Holistic Watershed Approach, Watershed Management Framework, Watershed Network, and Stream Partners Program.